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ABSTRACT

Formal guidance and counseling in Kenya is recognized more than ever. The development of effective guidance and counseling programs will be guided by needs assessment. This study used data from a larger study on guidance and counseling needs assessment of primary school pupils of Gachika Sub-location, Nyeri Town, and Nairobi City. Differences in ethnic groups, location of subjects (rural, semi-urban, and urban), age of subjects, and discrepancy between pupils' perception of their own problems and perceptions of their teachers were some of the factors that contributed to the necessity of carrying out a needs assessment before developing guidance and counseling programs in schools. Specifically this study sought to delineate academic, occupational, and psychological needs of pupils (N=720) in grades seven and five. The pupils rated their perception of their problems regarding how often each stated problem affected them. In addition, 69 teachers who taught the pupils were used in that study to countercheck the pupils' responses. The results indicated that pupils were under great pressure to perform well in the Certificate of Primary Education and to be admitted into government secondary schools from parents and relatives. The pupils expressed a high anxiety and fear related to this pressure. A guidance and counseling program could be effective in changing such devastating and unrealistic attitudes on the part of parents and pupils themselves. (ABL)

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN KENYA

by

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Formal Guidance and Counselling in Kenya is recognized at present time more than over before. The development of effective Guidance and Counselling programmes will be guided by needs assessment. This paper underscores the importance of carrying out such an exercise. Specifically, the paper uses data from a larger research done by the present writer on Guidance and Counselling needs assessment of primary school pupils of Gachika Sub-location, Nyeri Town, and Nairobi City. Differences in ethnic groups, location of subjects (rural, semi-urban, and urban), age of subjects, and discrepancy between pupils' perception of their own problems and that of their teachers were some of the factors that contributed to the necessity of carrying out a need assessment before developing Guidance and Counselling programmes in schools. Approach to life borrowed from the western culture is increasingly preferred to the collective

approach of the past African generations. Each person is pre-occupied with his own concerns, yet no longer has the support of extended family system. Hence the need for provision of formal Guidance and Counselling.

The Kenyan Situation

Guidance and Counselling in Kenya schools was officially recognized in 1971. In that year, the Ministry of Education established a Guidance and Counselling Unit under its Inspectorate Division. The Unit was to deal with educational guidance, vocational guidance, and psychological counselling in schools.

Since that time, the Ministry of Education has established Guidance and Counselling programmes in schools. Most of those programmes are run by regular teachers designated as counsellors. They usually have very little or no counselling training. In addition to their lack of training, they perform the duties of regular teachers plus that of counsellors. Consequently guidance and counselling in schools has not received the emphasis it deserves.

Further, very little research has been done in Kenya to guide its development. Eshiwani (1981) made an extensive survey of educational research

done in Kenya between 1963 and 1980. He found that only 19% of the research was in the area of students' evaluation (guidance and counselling included). Eshiwani's study raised criticism of the Department of Educational Psychology at Kenyatta University College (was a constituent college of University of Nairobi at the time of the above study) for having done very little research in its field of study. He stated:

> Despite the fact that the Department of Educational Psychology has been one of the most active departments in graduate studies, there are glaring gaps in educational research directly connected with it: tests and test construction, guidance and counselling, students' behavior and attitudes, etc. (p. 16).

Challenged by the above criticism the present writer of this paper conducted a research for guidance and counselling needs assessment for primary school pupils in Kenya in 1985. Its results are used in this paper to emphasize the importance of needs assessment for developing effective guidance and counselling programmes. The percentages of both the pupils' and teachers' responses are reproduced for the purpose of this paper. Other relevant data will only be referred to.

The purpose of the above mentioned study was to assess guidance and counselling needs of primary school pupils. Specifically the study sought to

delineate academic, occupational, and psychological needs of pupils in standards (grades) seven and five.

The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E.) examination offered in standard eight at present was offered in standard seven and was known as certificate of Primary Education (C.P.E.) examination. Therefore standard seven was considered a very crucial group for the study. They were waiting to sit for CPE examination, which would determine whether they would qualify for positions in the coveted Government secondary schools in the country or not. Those who did not join the Government secondary schools had to make decisions regarding their future life. Some would continue with education in private or Harambee schools (local community schools) depending on availability of finance. The remaining pupils would choose non-academic alternatives if available such as joining village Polytechnics.

Standard five pupils were included in the study for comparison purpose. Their position contrasted with that of standard seven pupils. They were younger, and were not sitting for a national examination until they reached standard seven.

Gachika Sub-location in Nyeri District (a rural

area), Nyeri Town (semi-urban area), and Nairobi City (urban area) were used for the study. It was thought that the three locations (rural, semi-urban, and urban) would represent a cross-section assessment of the pupils' needs.

A total of 720 pupils (360 boys, and 360 girls) drawn from twelve primary schools (3 from Gachika sub-location, 4 from Nyeri Town, and 5 from Nairobi City) were utilized for the study. the pupils were asked to rate their perception of their problems on a three point scale (many times, sometimes, and never) regarding how often each stated problem affected them. The percentages of their responses are presented in the first and second columns of Table I below. Positive responses (i.e. for many times, sometimes) in the original study are added together for this paper.

In addition, 69 teachers (36 males, and 33 females) who taught the pupils were used in that study to counter-check the pupils' responses. They filled basically a similar questionnaire but items worded to suit them. The percentages of their responses are presented in the third and fourth columns of Table I below.

Table I

Percentage of Responses by All Students and Teachers

Part I Academic Problems		How often does the stated problem affect you/student.			
		Student		Teacher	
		Many times or sometimes	Never	Many time some-times	Never
1.	Pressured to pass CPE	95	5	93	7
2.	Fear of failing CPE	77	23	93	7
3.	Not qualify for Government School	75	25	94	7
4.	Shy asking questions	71	29	97	3
5.	Putting off studying	68	32	82	18
6.	Not paying attention	64	36	96	4
7.	Fear of competition	60	40	94	6
8.	Non-examinable subjects	59	41	80	20
9.	Unwilling to repeat	59	41	80	20
10.	Too many duties after school	58	42	77	23
11.	How to study for tests	57	43	91	9
12.	Information about schools	55	45	79	21
13.	How to choose schools	54	46	74	26
14.	Activities interfere with studies	53	47	70	30
15.	Afraid of tests	49	51	84	16
16.	Help from teachers	39	61	61	39
17.	Poor study light at night	35	65	65	35
18.	Shy to ask for help	32	68	75	25
19.	Cheating in tests	30	70	74	26
20.	Dropping out of school	20	80	54	46

Part 2

Occupational Problems

21.	Confused choosing a career	76	24	80	20
22.	Afraid of choosing wrong career	73	27	70	30
23.	No employment available	70	30	94	6
24.	No job information	68	32	77	23
25.	Lack of career guidance	64	36	72	28
26.	No job with present level of Education	63	37	81	19
27.	Influenced by friends	30	70	55	45
28.	Forced to seek employment	22	78	61	39
29.	Forced to join village Polytechnic	16	84	61	39
30.	Working instead of schooling	8	92	45	55

Part 3

Psychological Problems

31.	Involved in pregnancy	79	21	80	20
32.	Parents making decisions	73	27	77	23
33.	Caught smoking cigarettes	66	34	71	29
34.	Hungry in school	64	36	78	22
35.	Relation with opposite sex	62	38	85	15
36.	Co-operation with peer	45	55	74	26
37.	Parents too poor	36	64	76	23
38.	Obeying teachers	35	65	62	38
39.	Lack of parental love	20	80	53	47
40.	Afraid of school	13	87	48	52

A general look at the pupils' and teachers' responses would reveal the following observations:

The pupils across the three locations - rural, semi-urban, urban - had guidance and counselling needs. Academic needs were rated high by both pupils and teachers. Problems related to passing CPE, for example, were rated the highest. Specifically, pupils were pressured by parents and themselves to pass CPE (pupils: 95%, teachers: 93%). They feared failing CPE (pupils: 77%, teachers: 93%) and loosing admission into a Government secondary school (pupils : 75%, teachers: 94%).

Given the importance attached to passing CPE or (KCPE) by the pupils, parents, and teachers in Kenya, the result of high percentages in the study was not surprising. CPE results significantly determine the pupils' whole future as well as their academic pursuit. Somerset (1974) reported:

> The Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) determines the whole destiny of a child. If he passes well and enters a government secondary school, he has a good chance of ultimately entering a job where his income may reach ten, twenty or even one hundred times the national per-capita average. But if he fails, his lifetime earnings may not amount to much more than of those of someone with no formal education (p. 149).

In contrast, dropping out of school was rated

very low by the pupils (20%). This result showed that formal education was and is still regarded by the pupils as the key to a better future. Majority of the pupils hope to get it despite of the stiff competition and sometimes their poor academic performance.

Their preference of pursuit of academic education was strengthened by their response of item number 30.. Very few pupils (8%) indicated they would want to work instead of with academic education. Seventy six per cent of the pupils indicated they were confused in choosing a future career or choosing a wrong one, (73%). In general, needs related to career were rated lower than those related to academics. Pupils in primary schools in Kenya are pre-occupied with doing well and progress academically than in occupational problems which they consider remote in their future. They believe that success in academic area will automatically solve the problem of choosing a career.

Regarding the psychological needs, fear of being involved in pregnancy was rated the highest by both pupils and teachers (79% and 80% respectively). Majority of the pupils in the study were in or approaching adolescence stage. The above result showed that they were aware of the potential problem

of boys making girls pregnant, or girls becoming pregnant. In either case, being involved in a pregnancy case for pupils is regarded as a serious breach of established moral standards.

Another problem that was highlighted in that section was tendency of parents making decisions for pupils. They were on a transitional stage. On one hand they were seeking their autonomy as adolescents. On the other hand, the parents regarded them as children. Hence they (parents) persisted in making decisions for them.

Asked if they were afraid of school, only 13% of the pupils and 48% of the teachers indicated they were afraid. The low response by the pupils was a clear indication that they regarded school as an important place.

Only 20% of the pupils indicated they lacked parental love. Teachers' response were higher than that of the pupils (53%). In general, there was a disscrepancy between the pupils' and the teachers' perception of the pupils' guidance and counselling needs. The teachers indicated the pupils had more problems than the pupils thought they had. This finding suggests that there was a tendency for

teachers to exegerate the pupils conselling needs. Teachers and counsellors should try to perceive pupils' needs from the pupils' perspective.

There was a significance difference in pupils' perception of their own problems between all three locations - rural, semi-urban, and urban. The rural pupils indicated they had more problems than the semi-urban, and urban pupils respectively. The semi- urban pupils indicated they had more problems than urban pupils.

Kenya has different rural semi-urban, and urban areas due to differences in ethnic groups and geographical nature of those locations. These factors are likely to influence the pupils' perception of their needs. The pupils from the rural and semi-urban areas used for the above study were mainly of Kikuyu tribe. Other areas may be dominated by other ethnic groups. Research would reveal such difference. The result would be helpful in developing guidance and counselling programmes for meeting specific pupils' needs in different parts of Kenya.

Contrary to the researcher's assumption, standard five pupils indicated they had more problems than standard seven pupils. The result was important.

Perhaps the teachers assumed that pupils in lower classes had less problems than those in upper classes. As a result, they concentrated their efforts to helping pupils in upper classes. Assessment of pupils' guidance and counselling needs would reveal which areas of counselling, and group should receive more emphasis. In the above study emphasis was on standard seven instead of standard five.

Pupils were under great pressure to perform well in CPE examination and be admitted into government secondary schools from parents and relatives. the pupils expressed a high anxiety and fear related to the above mentioned pressure. Some of them expressed they were haunted by fear of being rejected by their parents and society if they failed in school, thus not meeting those expetations. The fact from previous years is that more than 65% of those pupils have failed to be admitted to any kind of secondary school, let alone government ones. A guidance and counselling programme can be effective in changing such devastating and unrealistic attitudes on the part of parents and the pupils themselves. The 8-4-4 (8 years of primary, 4 years of secondary school, and 4 years of university education) system will contribute greatly toward changing the above attitudes. In the past, the curriculum offered

theoretical knowledge. Pupils completed school without exploring their career interest. The 8-4-4 system of education has a practical bias which offers opportunity for pupils to explore their career interest. Pupils who do not continue with academic education will pursue their career interest elsewhere developing skills they started while in school.

Conclusion

Needs assessment for guidance and counselling is inevitable to assist in the development of effective programmes. The study used for this paper has clearly demonstrated that need. Research in the above area of study in Kenya should be accelerated to steer the present rapid development of guidance and counselling in the right direction.

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